



KNOWLEDGE TO
MEET THE CHALLENGE OF
CRIME AND JUSTICE

National Institute of Justice

Julie E. Samuels
Acting Director

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Director's Message

The common threads running through this quarter's *NIJ Journal* are the new challenges facing criminal justice professionals—in the form of new kinds of crime—and the new ways we are responding to traditional challenges.

Jim Finckenauer's article on transnational crime walks us through the problems created by a global economy, increased immigration, and improved technology. He points out that these factors do not *cause* crime, but they do facilitate it. Faster international travel and almost instantaneous business transactions, for example, enhance a criminal's ability to commit crimes that transcend geographic borders.

Another new issue facing law enforcement today comes from the scores of mentally ill persons who live on the streets in many urban centers. Linda Teplin discusses the discretion police officers have when they respond to a mentally ill person who is causing a disturbance. The criminal justice system has become a last resort for mentally ill persons who for one reason or another cannot be properly cared for by the mental health system.

Lauren Taylor's article focuses on a new response to an old challenge. She describes the state of "smart" guns and the NIJ-funded technology that may eventually lead to safer guns for criminal justice professionals. Sixteen percent of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty are shot with a service weapon. NIJ's challenge is to find a weapon that is both reliable and "smart" enough to prevent unauthorized persons from using it.

Another new response to a familiar challenge is taking place in State and local corrections facilities across the country. The Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program is designed to reduce recidivism by providing treatment services to drug-abusing inmates. Findings about the program's effects on inmate behavior are still coming in, but preliminary data indicate that the program has helped States to increase substance abuse treatment in correctional facilities and also helped them to develop better screening and assessment tools to identify inmates who can be helped by treatment.

During my tenure as acting director, NIJ will continue to invest in research that will increase our understanding of the new challenges and develop solutions to address them so that our communities are safe.

Julie E. Samuels
Acting Director